



March 27, 2012

Hon. John Tierney
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Tierney:

I am writing on behalf of The Corps Network (TCN) to support HR 4227, The Workforce Investment Act of 2012 to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). We appreciate your leadership on this important issue.

Service and Conservation Corps are a direct descendant of the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, in which three million young men dramatically improved the nation's public lands while receiving food, shelter, education, and a precious \$30-a-month stipend. The Corps Network's member Service and Conservation Corps operate in every state and the District of Columbia. Over 30,000 Corpsmembers, ages 16-25, annually mobilize approximately 289,000 community volunteers who in conjunction with Corpsmembers generate 13.5 million hours of service every year.

Today's Service and Conservation Corps provide a wealth of conservation, infrastructure improvement, and human service projects-those identified by communities as important. Some Corps improve and preserve our public lands and national parks. Others provide critical energy conservation services, including weatherization, restore natural habitats and create urban parks and gardens. Still others provide disaster preparation and recovery to under-resourced communities. Finally, Corps improve the quality of life in low-income communities by renovating deteriorating housing and providing support to in-school and after school education programs.

We are particularly pleased that HR 4227 recognizes the important role that youth service and conservation corps play in educating and training youth, particularly disconnected youth, for jobs. Over the course of the last three-plus decades, Corps across the country have helped hundreds of thousands of youth enter the workforce.

The national unemployment rate is now 8.3 percent, but for workers without a high school diploma, it is 12.9 percent (4.6 percentage points higher than those with a high school diploma and 5.6 percent higher than those with some college). In March, the unemployment rate for teenagers was 23.8 percent, more than three times the rate for adult men and women (7.7 percent), 50 percent higher than for blacks (14.1 percent) and more than twice the rate for Hispanics (10.7 percent). Youth unemployment is a problem that threatens the economic stability of families and communities throughout this nation.

Therefore, we also support your decision not to consolidate Youth Activities funding into an adult-focused Workforce Investment Fund. We believe that there must be a Youth Activities funding stream because in our experience whenever youth and adults are included in the same stream, the adults receive more services than the youth.

Youth unemployment continues to remain unacceptably high. Disadvantaged and out-of-school youth have limited access to job training and education resources that will assist them in finding and keeping jobs. We hope that you, and your colleagues, will proceed on a bipartisan basis to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act, and in the process further strengthen those provisions that link service and conservation corps more closely to the workforce system and expand the ability of corps to serve disconnected youth.

We look forward to working with you to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,



Mary Ellen Ardouny
Vice President of External Affairs